

Coalition of Veterans Organizations

**CVO**

*Leave No  
Veteran Behind*

# **VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE REPORT**

PREPARED BY  
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**NOVEMBER 2023**

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by

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1. In reporting legislation that has been introduced, the same bills and writeups from the previous month will be repeated, with new bills or changes in **boldface**.

2. S. 10: VA Careers Act of 2023: Legislation to bolster efforts to recruit and retain strong clinical and managerial leadership in the VA health care system and make other important improvements to attract clinicians in scarce medical specialties. It has **10** co-sponsors, none from IL.

3. S. 42: Build for Veterans Act of 2023: This infrastructure bill has **10** co-sponsors, none from IL.

4. S.141: Elizabeth Dole Home Care Act: It expands the program for home care. It has **27** co-sponsors, none from IL. H. R. 542 (House version) has **76** co-sponsors, 4 from IL (Underwood, Budzinski, Schakowsky, Ramirez).

5. Cong Julia Brownley introduced H. R. 2413: Dental Care for Veterans Act, the same as H. R. 96 and H.R. 914. It has **14** co-sponsors, 10 from IL (Garcia, Quigley, Schakowsky, Underwood, Krishnamoorthi, Casten, Jackson, Kelly, Davis, **Ramirez**).

I can email you the letters that I send (one for those who previously co-sponsored and one for those who have not) so you can use it, or if you give me the email address of a congressman's DC staffer who handles veterans issues, I can email it, but if they don't co-sponsor, you can call them 2 weeks later.

Brownley's Office has not sent a "Dear Colleagues" letter (asking other congressmen to co-sponsor), but if she does, I will spam it out.

**In last month's report, I asked that we concentrate on Cong. Schneider, Foster, and Ramirez, asking that everyone call their DC offices. I don't know how many of you called, but I did. Schneider's staffer asked my zip code and said that Schneider was not my congressman. Foster's office took my email address and replied with all of the things that Foster is doing for veterans, but failed to mention H. R. 2413. I will reply to that letter. Ramirez co-sponsored. This month, please concentrate on Cong. Budzinski, since she's on the Healthcare subcommittee of the Veterans Affairs Cmte.**

6. H. R. 2410: VET CARE Act of 2023: It establishes a pilot program for dental care, but it's only for those with diabetes who are 40-70 years old. It has 12 co-sponsors, none from IL. We are not supporting this bill.

7. H. R. 1767: Bill to restore GI Bill education benefits to defrauded student veterans. It was introduced by Cong. Delia Ramirez (IL) and has 17 co-sponsors, 2 from IL (Schakowsky, Budzinski).

8. S. 1954: Improving Whole Health for Veterans with Chronic Conditions Act. This bill was introduced by Sen. Bernie Sanders, whereby veterans would have to get heart or kidney disease in order to get dental care. It has **13** co-sponsors, 1 from IL (Durbin). H. R. 4150 is the house version. It has **3** co-sponsors (not from IL). We are not supporting these bills, because veterans should not have to contract health problems in order to get treatment for another.

9. S. 106: Commitment to Veteran Support and Outreach Act. It would give \$ to states for VA outreach. It has **14** co-sponsors, none from IL. H. R. 984 (House version) has **41** co-sponsors, one from IL (Underwood).

10. Veterans and Family Advisory Council (monthly meetings):

At the Oct. meeting, there was an incomplete report on pending issues. The Nov. meeting was canceled.

I proposed that we hire a massage therapist. There are many soft tissue injuries that can best be treated with a massage therapist. It was well-received.

11. VACCC: Many veterans testified at the Cook County Board's consideration of the funding. Fortunately, our request was passed.

My earlier proposal to get mailboxes for homeless veterans is now being addressed. If a person had no address, he can not get many benefits that he could get if he had one. It is also more difficult to submit a job application without an address.

The good news is that the VACCC meetings are now quarterly. A year ago, the meeting could be taken up with the role call and little else, but now, things are getting done, although with our growth, the votes often take a long time.

The bad news is that the meetings are in person, but with members from all parts of Cook County, the meeting sites are far and inconvenient for many members. The date of the meetings are fixed, as though God handed down the bylaws on tablets of stone. In other words, the next meeting is on Dec. 26 (Boxing Day).

12. At our last meeting, the need for media coverage of the dental issue came up. Show me a person who thinks that getting coverage is easy, and I will show you someone who has never done it.

WFLD's Natalie Bomke will be doing a segment in the future, but we don't know when. A NBC reporter who writes online reports will also do a story on dental care, but for the time being they are busy with the war in Gaza.

13. I showed my Point Paper on Copays to the Chmn of Veterans Legislative Voice. She suggested that I write to Sen. Blumenthal and King. I did, but got no reply.

14. VA Secy. McDonough recently held a Town Haul meeting, where people could submit questions in writing, and the moderator would pose them to the Secy. There were pro/con questions relating to gender confirmation surgery. In response to the question that asked why this care is being given, the Secy replied that veterans with this problem were committing suicide.

I mentioned this to Patricia Devore, who runs the Veterans Smile Program. She replied that veterans are committing suicide on account of dental problems, and that some she has worked with came very close to taking their lives. In other words, we should add suicide to our list of reasons for getting veteran dental care. I will bring this up at McDonough's next Town Haul meeting.